

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 06393 291029Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 /072 W

-----000573 291053Z /10

P R 290836Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5436

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6393

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PINT KS

SUBJ: PRISONER RELEASE: WILL THERE BE MORE?

REF: SEOUL 6149

1. OPPOSITION AND HUMAN RIGHTS CIRCLES REMAIN OPTIMISTIC THAT MORE EM-9 PRISONERS WILL BE RELEASED, AND, INDEED, THERE ARE CONTINUING SIGNS OF ROKG EFFORTS TO GET PRISONERS TO SIGN STATEMENTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE ROKG TO RELEASE THEM WITHOUT LOSS OF FACE. NDP LEADER YI CHOL-SUNG TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT MOST PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED IN GROUPS FROM NOW ON EXTENDING POSSIBLY THROUGH THE YEAR. YI ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT PROGRESS WAS POSSIBLE IN MODIFYING OR ELIMINATING EMERGENCY MEASURES. HE THOUGHT HE HAD STRONG SUPPORT FROM RESPONSIBLE CHURCH LEADERS, FROM THE PUBLIC AND FROM HIS PARTY FOR HIS STEP AT A TIME STRATEGY FOR RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY.

2. GETTING PRISONERS TO SIGN STATEMENTS APPARENTLY REMAINS A STICKING POINT, BUT EVEN HERE SOME PROGRESS IS EVIDENT. REV. KIM KWAN-SUK, KNCC SEC GEN, TOLD EMBOFF THAT SENIOR KCIA AGENT SOUGHT HIM OUT TO EXPLAIN THAT IT WAS NOT ROKG POLICY THAT PRISONERS DEMONSTRATE REPENTANCE AND THAT
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 06393 291029Z

PROSECUTOR'S ASSERTION TO THIS EFFECT ON JULY 17 WAS UNFORTUNATE MISSTATEMENT. KCIA OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY ADVISED THAT ROKG MERELY WANTED A SIGNED STATEMENT TO FULFILL ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS.

3. REF. KIM SAID KNCC RESPONDED BY SETTING UP A COMMITTEE OF MEMBERS OF FAMILIES OF EM-9 PRISONERS TO DRAFT A

STANDARD MEMORANDUM FOR SIGNATURE OF ALL PRISONERS.
KNCC HOPES THIS TACTIC WILL PRODUCE A DOCUMENT WHICH
WILL NOT COMPROMISE CONVICTIONS OF IMPRISONED AND WHICH
WILL NOT LEAD ITSELF TO POSSIBLE ABUSE BY ROKG BEFORE
DOMESTIC OR INTERNATIONAL OPINION. FURTHERMORE, KNCC FEELS
THAT INVOLVING FAMILIES IN DRAFTING MEMORANDUM WILL MAKE
EVEN MORE RELUCTANT PRISONERS AMENABLE TO SIGNING SINCE
THEIR ACTION COULD BE SEEN AS RESPONSE TO FAMILY PRESSURE
RATHER THAN TO RIKG ULTIMATUM.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, REV. KIM REPORTS THAT DRAFTING
SESSIONS HAVE BEEN STORMY WITH SOME MEMBERS ATTEMPTING
TO INCLUDE LANGUAGE WHICH WOULD MAKE MEMORANDUM AN
INDICTMENT OF ROKG POLICY. REV. KIM SAYS THAT HE HAS
BEEN CALLED UPON TO MEDIATE DISPUTE AFTER DISPUTE AND HAS
FOUND SESSIONS SO ENERVATING THAT HE HAS DECIDED TO
DEPART AT ONCE FOR A WEEK AT THE BEACH TO RECUPERATE.
HE IS CONFIDENT THAT COMMITTEE WILL COME UP WITH
REALISTIC DOCUMENT BECAUSE MEMBERS FEELS THAT FREEDOM OF
THEIR LOVED O KS DEPENDS IN GOOD MEASURE ON THEIR PRUDENT
EFFORT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRISONERS RELEASE, POLITICAL PRISONERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SEOUL06393
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770272-0452
Format: TEL
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977074/aaaaaczh.tel
Line Count: 84
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 812f0467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SEOUL 6149
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1808749
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRISONER RELEASE: WILL THERE BE MORE?
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, KS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/812f0467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009